

WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCIL ESSENTIALS

No. 5: Agendas and Minutes



1. Agendas

- 1.1. There must be at least three clear days' public notice of the time and place of a meeting and its agenda¹.
- 1.2. A councillor must be summoned to attend a meeting of the full council at least three clear days before the meeting. The summons must include an agenda for the meeting and be served at the residence of the councillor². It is accepted practice for standing orders³ to permit electronic service⁴ provided the email to councillors includes the electronic signature and title of the Proper Officer.
- 1.3. The summons must specify the business which it is proposed to transact⁵. A local Council cannot lawfully decide any matter which is not specified in the summons⁶
- 1.4. Motions (proposals) are included on the agenda⁷ because no business can be agreed unless it is on the agenda.⁸ The decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include a motion is final.⁹
- 1.5. Any other business should not appear on the agenda as item to be discussed at the meeting should be specified on the agenda¹⁰.

2. Recommended order for an agenda¹¹

- 2.1. There are accepted conventions and practices as to what happens at a meeting and the order in which they happen. Below is a guide to the basic sequence of events at a meeting:
 - The names of councillors present and absent are noted for inclusion in the minutes of the meeting.
 - Chair opens the meeting and makes short appropriate procedural announcements.
 - If a councillor is unable to attend a meeting and has formally sought approval for absence, the request will be considered. If granted, a resolution approving absence is included in the minutes.
 - Certain interests of councillors in agenda items are, as appropriate, disclosed and minuted.
 - Subject to standing orders¹², dispensation requests made by councillors may be considered.
 - The accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting is formally approved.
 - Subject to standing orders¹³, the public are permitted to speak about business on the agenda.
 - Updates to resolutions from the last meeting are received.
 - Motions or other items of business on the agenda are considered and resolved.
 - Standing items of business (e.g. authorisation of payments, the formal acknowledgement of the minutes of a committee and/or as the case may be sub-committee) are dealt with.
 - The Chairman formally closes the meeting.
 - In Wickham Market, written reports are required in advance of the meeting for updates from committees, projects, or actions from previous meeting¹⁴. Reports are published with the agenda so that members of the public can read them ahead of the meeting and decide whether they want to attend. The report author then takes questions rather than presenting the whole report.¹⁵

¹ Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, paragraph 10(2)(a)

² Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, paragraph 10(2)(b)

³ Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, paragraph 42

⁴ Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, paragraph 10(2)(b) As amended by the Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 (SI2015/5) and para 26(2)(b)

⁵ Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, paragraph 10(2)(b) As amended by the Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 (SI2015/5) and para 26(2)(b)

⁶ Longfield Parish Council v Wright (1918) 88 LJ Ch 119 and WMPC Standing Orders 9 b

⁷ WMPC Standing Orders 9

⁸ WMPC Standing Orders 9 b

⁹ WMPC Standing Orders 9 f

¹⁰ Local Council Administration, Arnold Baker D 7.5

¹¹ Local Councils Explained Ch 7, p149

¹² Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, paragraph 42

¹³ Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, paragraph 42

¹⁴ WMPC Essentials No.6: Meeting Reports and Motions

¹⁵ WMPC Essentials No. 6: Meeting Reports and Motions

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No. 5: Agendas and Minutes

3. Minutes

3.1. Minutes of proceedings of a local Council and of its committees must be kept.¹⁶ The style and appearance of the minutes of a meeting are not subject to statutory requirements. In NALC's view, the content of the minutes should be informative and relevant, yet concise.¹⁷

4. Form of minutes¹⁸

4.1. The style, form and amount of detail in the minutes for a meeting is a matter for individual councils¹⁹. The main purpose of the minutes is to record the resolutions made at the meeting. They do not need to record the proposer or seconder. A well-worded resolution is clear in meaning to anyone not at the meeting and years later. The resolutions should visibly stand out when presented in the minutes for easy reference. They may, for example, be in bold, italics or upper case.

4.2. Minutes of a meeting are not a verbatim record of the meeting. Neither are they a story of what happened at the meeting and should not document opinions or views that were expressed at the meeting. There is no need to include opinions such as "heated debate" or "valuable comment" or "Cllr X disagreed".

4.3. Minutes should distinguish between (i) the receipt or acknowledgement of the minutes of a committee or sub-committee and (ii) resolutions that follow the particular resolutions in the minutes of another meeting or the recommendations in a report. The minutes should also record the interests of councillors that were declared at a meeting and if they left the meeting on account of them.

4.4. Well-written minutes are:

- brief yet informative
- factual, accurate, relevant
- logically presented and
- a clear record of resolutions (including recommendations).

5. Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) advise

5.1. Minutes should be as concise as possible. As a minimum the minutes must record the resolution or the decision but can also include a short summary of important points where this adds value. A detailed account of who said what is neither necessary nor advisable²⁰

6. Arnold Baker (Local Council Administration) advises

6.1. Minutes should be as short as is consistent with clarity and accuracy. They should not be a verbatim report nor a record of discussions or argument made by Councillors. Short simple minutes are to be preferred²¹

6.2. Minutes are a formal record of the meeting maintained by the Clerk. Members are not entitled to require a change to the minutes unless there is an obvious error or record of a resolution is incorrect²²

7. Draft Minutes

7.1. Once the draft minutes have been prepared, they are often submitted to the chairman of the meeting concerned to check. Once the chairman has commented on the minutes and changes, if any are made, the draft minutes may be circulated for information only to all councillors, or where the minutes relate to a meeting of a committee to the members of the committee²³. The draft minutes of a meeting should be formally approved (with any necessary) at the next meeting²⁴. After the draft minutes are approved, the contemporaneous notes or the recording of the meeting should be destroyed.²⁵ A meeting shall not exceed a period of 2 hours.²⁶

¹⁶ Local Government Act 1972, Sch12, para 41 (1)

¹⁷ NALC LTN 5E Parish Council Meetings, s64

¹⁸ Local Councils Explained, Meera Tharmarajah ch 11

¹⁹ WMPC Standing Orders 3 S a)

²⁰ Society of Local Council Clerks, The Essential Clerk, p17

²¹ Local Council Administration, Arnold Baker 7, S 7.39

²² Local Council Administration, Arnold Baker 7, S 7.39

²³ Local Councils Explained, Meera Tharmarajah Ch 11 – Draft Minutes

²⁴ Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, paragraphs 41(1) and 44

²⁵ Local Councils Explained, Meera Tharmarajah Ch 11 – Draft Minutes

²⁶ WMPC Standing Orders 3 W